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A CURA DI

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historica

16

Giuseppe Mazzini's democratic theory of nations

di David Ragazzoni

It was your mission to provide the Italian people, now in its infancy, with a robust moral education. Quite the contrary, you taught them the putrefying science of past civilizations, the Machiavellianism typical of centuries when the voice of conscience used to remain unheard, the pursuit of short-term interests, the worship of power and strength, the *arcana imperii* of constitutional monarchies, the kind of hypocrisy that led France to its present situation. You taught them to betray their own goals, to ally with those who despise them, to obstruct those who work towards their progress. You taught them to embrace and practice the skepticism typical of factions that are named after individual leaders rather than principles and values. You taught them to make political decisions not by distinguishing what is good from what is not, but based on a contingent notion of utility, for the sake of short-term gains rather than long-term advancements. You taught the new-born Italian people the materialistic art of the expedient as well as the atheistic logic of costs and benefits, which is antithetical to the enthusiasm that only can lead to great endeavors. […] Between me and you, Mr. Cavour, there is an abyss. […] We represent Italy; you represent the old and selfish ambitions of the Savoy dynasty. We want national unity more than anything else; you fear national unity and have been doing all you can to prevent it. […] We have one faith: NATIONAL FAITH; one principle: the popular and republican PRINCIPLE; one political project: the expression, both in words and in deeds, of ITALIAN LAW. […] You, royalists, cannot make Italy free from Austria. You cannot make Italy.

> Only the people can. […] It was your mission to italianize Piedmont and make it part and parcel of our common homeland. […] All the results that you claim for yourself and Marquise d'Azeglio have been achieved exclusively through the efforts and sacrifices of those martyrs who gave their lives to the REPUBLICAN FAITH, in the pursuit of an IDEA OF NATION.
>
> Giuseppe Mazzini, *To Count Cavour*, June 1858[1]

This chapter explores the philosophical foundations of Giuseppe Mazzini's vision of nationhood. It argues that reconnecting his ideas on nationalism and international politics to his thoughts on democracy and representative government is crucial for properly understanding his political project. Though he never wrote a systematic treatise on politics, his numerous writings and letters on the topic (now partially translated in English by Princeton University Press) remain an invaluable source to mine for anyone interested in retrieving the complexity, and originality, of Mazzini's political thought beyond its multiple appropriations and (mis)readings, both ideological and historiographical.

Section 1 briefly draws on Chabod, Salvemini, and most recently Vivarelli to retrieve two competing visions of nation in the Italian Risorgimento – Mazzini's and Cavour's – and highlight their prominent role in later political and intellectual traditions of unitary Italy. Against the tendency to read Mazzini as a forerunner of Fascism, it insists on the distinction that he traced between nationalism and nationality to advocate a democratic form of cosmopolitanism as the foundation of a peaceful international order.

Section 2 maps the bibliographical landscape of nationalism studies in English over the past century, both in political theory and in the history of ideas, and singles out three distinct phases in the way nationalism scholars have examined – or ignored – Mazzini's contribution across the decades (1930s-1960s; early 1970s-mid-1990s; late 1990s

1 My gratitude goes to Eugenio Biagini, Nadia Urbinati, and Konstantina Zanou for useful bibliographical information as well as for their comments, critiques, and suggestions on a previous draft of this chapter. Mazzini (1972: 760-799: 794-799).

onward). In the context of the third of such phases, the ideas of Mazzini have gained new prominence, leading to the first English edition of his most important writings on nation-building and international relations and attracting the attention of scholars interested in the history of popular sovereignty, nationalism, and democracy in a comparative perspective.

Finally, section 3 connects the findings of the previous two sections to further explore the intellectual sources and defining features of Mazzini's vision of nation. Retrieving his contribution to the broader mid-19th century European debates on democracy, it shows that Mazzini's ideas on democracy, sovereignty, and the people were constitutive of his political project as much as his theory of the Italian nation, which he envisioned as a democratic, unitary republic and an association of equal citizens. His emphasis on «nationality» rather than « »nationalism» rested on the pursuit of a cultural (not just juridical) entity entailing both pre-political factors and a principled political project in which self-determination was constrained by, and tied to, democratic, representative institutions. At the same time, he consistently considered nations an important, but intermediary, step in the progression from individuals to Humanity, within an inclusive universalism capable of reconciling freedom with solidarity.

1. *Mazzini and Cavour: two competing visions of nation*

In 2011, in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy (1861), historian Roberto Vivarelli drew on the university lectures by Federico Chabod and Gaetano Salvemini[2] to distinguish between two competing visions of nationhood in the Italian Risorgimento: Giuseppe Mazzini's and Camillo Benso Count of Cavour's. While the former, he claimed, epitomized a Romantic conception of the nation as a community of faith («comunità di credenti») and the outcome of a unitary

2 Respectively delivered in 1946-47 at the University of Rome and in 1949-50 at the University of Florence under the titles *L'idea di nazione* and *Il Risorgimento* (cfr. Vivarelli, 2013: 83).

will pivoting around the republican notions of God and the People, the latter was a product of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on individual autonomy and critical thinking, and exemplified an idea of the nation as a community of citizens («comunità di cittadini»). Eventually the latter, not the former, proved victorious, when the Kingdom of Italy replaced the fragmented states of the Italian peninsula; «Cavour's ideas, not Mazzini's, triumphed in 1861 and remained hegemonic until 1876» (cfr. Vivarelli, 2013: 58), that is, until the Historical Right (Destra Storica) was able to dominate the legislative and the executive and pursue the liberal ideas that Cavour had championed[3].

Though his stylized outline neglects an equally important vision of the nation (the federalist project of Carlo Cattaneo)[4] and never mentions Garibaldi (with Mazzini and Cavour, the third of the three «makers of modern Italy»: Marriott, 1901), the account offered by Vivarelli has a twofold merit, both historical and historiographical. On the one hand, it captures the two most influential paradigms of nationhood in the history of mid-19th century Italy; on the other, it suggests examining the trajectory of both in the *longue durée*.

Cavour and Mazzini died respectively in 1861 and 1872, but their intellectual and political legacies underwent profound transformations in the years to come. As Vivarelli observes, in the early 1870s the Italian moderate liberals followed in the footsteps of Cavour by prioritizing internal stability over nationalistic anxieties *à la* Bismarck. However, from 1876 the leaders of the Historical Left turned on its head the political vision of their liberal predecessors. While the disciples of Cavour had interpreted the Risorgimento as a point of arrival and called for the consolidation of the Italian state *within* its borders, the disciples of Mazzini considered it a point of departure and the beginning of a shining era for the projection of Italian nationhood *beyond* its frontiers (e.g., Francesco Crispi's bellicose ambitions)[5]. In Italy, Vivarelli

3 For recent overviews of Cavour's political thought and practice, also in a comparative perspective (with Lincoln's and Bismarck's), see Rusconi (2011); Salvadori (2011: 3-42); Dal Lago (2015: 61-91).

4 Vivarelli mentions it very briefly (2013: 57-58).

5 On which see the voluminous monograph by Duggan (2002).

concludes through Chabod, «those who opened the door to nationalism were the heirs of the democratic tradition – that is, those who embraced and revived the Romantic idea of the nation» and «converted Mazzini's patriotism into nationalism» (Vivarelli, 2013: 62, 64).

If 1861 marked the triumph of Cavour's project of nationhood (as Vivarelli suggests), the later political history of Italy witnessed the resurgence, and mostly the distortion, of Mazzini's vision. Fascism offers a paradigmatic example of the ideological (mis)readings that the ideas of Cavour and Mazzini underwent. In November 1921, almost one year before the March on Rome and Mussolini's rise to power, Fascist politician and statesman Dino Grandi compared Mazzini and Cavour's political ideas precisely through the lens of their philosophy of nation. He claimed that

> [l]iberalism considered the Nation and the Nation State only as means for the pursuit of individual freedom. It had no real concern for national matters. […] It generated a theory of the state as a purely juridical entity, revolving around a purely mechanical resolution of social conflict. […] This Cavourian conception of freedom, profoundly individualistic and intimately Spencerian, was anti-democratic insofar as it denied the importance of any feeling of solidarity and community – two notions that lay at the core of Mazzini's idea of the People (*Popolo*) as a national collective. […] Mazzini was the only one who truly understood the ideals of our Risorgimento. He envisioned the People as the historical consciousness of the Nation. He rejected individualism and celebrated the Nation as an immanent and enduring entity. (Grandi, 1966: 282-284)

Grandi's attempt to present Mazzini as a proto-Fascist theorist, together with Hegel and Treitschke (ivi: 279), was instrumental to an ideological reading of the first six decades of Italian political history – from the Risorgimento up through the aftermath of World War I – as a progressive development of a distinctively ethical ideal of the Nation – a «moral imperative» that connected Mussolini's vision to Mazzini's *via* the «imperial and Mediterranean» project of Francesco Crispi (ivi: 278, 287). Two years later (1923), neo-Hegelian philosopher Giovanni Gen-

tile followed in the very same footsteps. He presented Mazzini as the forerunner of Fascist imperialism and the early supporter of its expansionistic ambitions for which «there are not people with virtual rights to be recognized by other people». According to this reading, Mazzini's emphasis on nations rather than individuals signaled his belief in the obligation that citizens had to sacrifice themselves in the name of «conquest», a supreme goal that was «worthy and holy» (Gentile, 1946: 26).

Though his legacy remained highly contended and contested over the decades, and was met with praise and criticism across the political spectrum, Mazzini's idea of nation had nothing in common with the authoritarian nationalism of Crispi[6], nor did it remotely resemble the later celebration of the ethical state pursued by Fascism. His understanding of national self-determination was inclusive and grounded in a political, rather than ethnic, conceptualization of the people pivoting around the duties of nations towards Humanity. His distinction (in 1861) between «the sacred principle of Nationality» and «mean nationalism» (Mazzini, 1979: 21), as well as the pursuit of a «cosmopolitanism of nations» (advocated in 1834 in lieu of «a cosmopolitanism of individuals»)[7], were the staple of a philosophical and political project that meant to revise, rather than reject, the legacy of the Enlightenment, combining its universalistic aspirations with the secular Religion of Humanity typical of Saint-Simonian Positivism and the idea of a «mission» of nations so pervasive among the Romantics (cfr. Urbinati, 2008: 12) Denis Mack Smith emphasized this point in his 1994 monograph, when he noted that

6 Crispi himself praised Mazzini as the most important figure of the Italian Risorgimento. In a conversation with journalist and politician Ferdinando Martini, he described Mazzini's contribution as superior to that of King Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi and even Cavour («Cavour? What did Cavour do? He simply diplomatized the revolution»), and commented: «Mazzini, Mazzini, the greatest of all. In a hundred-year time those who write our history will call our age the century of Mazzini» (quoted from Duggan, 2008: 201). It is also worth recalling that Mazzini became part of the school *curricula* only in 1895 in the context of a broader educational project, promoted by Prime Minister Crispi, to «induce knowledge and love of the fatherland», while previous textbooks used to celebrate unconditionally the role of the King and presented Garibaldi and Cavour as two supporting actors (ivi, 200).

7 Cfr. Mazzini (1891-1908, vol. III: 7-11).

> Mazzini was a patriot not a nationalist, and indeed condemned nationalism as absolutely wrong. Despite what some critics said, from as early as 1836 he used the word 'nationalist' in a pejorative sense to denote those chauvinistic xenophobes and imperialists who sought to encroach on the rights of other peoples.[8] (Mack Smith, 1994: 12).

More recently, Nadia Urbinati has drawn new attention to the role that Mazzini played in the development of a third stripe of cosmopolitanism (beyond its humanist and neo-liberal branches, respectively rooted in Stoicism and natural rights doctrine, on the one hand, and the notion of free-market, on the other), conceptualizing the nation as the basic unit of a peaceful international order. In her reading, together with Kant and Condorcet, he stands out as a leading representative of a distinctively democratic form of cosmopolitanism that crossed Europe «as a Carsic river» (2008: 11) throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and surfaced at three main historical stages (the age of the Enlightenment, during the 1848-49 democratic revolutions, and after WWII). Maurizio Isabella has similarly emphasized the international dimension of Mazzini's vision of political freedom and peace and unveiled its eclectic philosophical foundations. The distinction between intellectual isolation and national independence (traced already in 1829 in the most important essay of his early years, *D'una letteratura europea*) entailed the belief in a civilizing, cosmopolitan process that would shape the entire European continent. It also rested on a philosophy of history merging Vico's idea of cyclical progress with Condorcet's faith in the advancement of civilization – a synthesis which owed significantly to the intellectual debates in the Milanese and the Neapolitan Enlightenments – and destined to become a common theme of the Risorgimento, emphasizing the connection between the national and the international sides of the pursuit of liberty and freedom (Isabella, 2008; Isabella, 2009: 98-99; Nabulsi, 2006). Although for several decades Anglo-American scholars did not consider him a creative mind worth studying on its

8 On the distinction between patriotism and nationalism, also with regard to Mazzini, see Viroli (1995).

own merit – «neither an original thinker nor a profound one» was the definition given by Hans Kohn, who presented his thought as a fuzzy pastiche of «few dogmas» that he «borrowed» from the French and the Germans and «to which he added a fervent Italian nationalism» (1946: 48; 79) –, it is now increasingly acknowledged that Mazzini was not just a revolutionary political agitator[9]. He was also, and perhaps unexpectedly (given that he never wrote a systematic treatise on politics), a revolutionary political mind, curious enough to absorb a multiplicity of intellectual traditions but capable of thinking critically and creatively about concepts and ideals. 'Democracy' and 'nation' above all, but also 'government', 'liberty', and 'society', as the one hundred and six volumes of his collected writings and letters show (Mazzini: 1906-1943).

According to Giuseppe Galasso (2011: 59), Mazzini as a theorist of nationhood and Mazzini as a theorist of democracy are not the same; they overlap to a significant extent and often employ the same language, but scholars ought to keep them separate without conflating their voices. Before questioning this interpretation, and showing that his vision of nations and his ideas on (representative) democracy do presuppose each other and ought to be studied together, it is worth outlining the 'life and times' of Mazzini within the evolving field of nationalism studies in English.

2. *Mazzini in the Anglo-American scholarship on nationalism*

As David Rowley (2012: 39-43) has recently observed, the place of Mazzini in the Anglo-American literature, both in political theory and the history of ideas, has undergone significant transformations over the decades, in turn mirroring important shifts in the scholarly approaches to nationalism. While today he is recognized as a visionary contributor

9 In Italy, the scholarly interest for Mazzini's place in the realm of ideas, and not simply as a man of action, has a long pedigree, which includes Cantimori *senior* (1904), Salvemini (1905), Levi (1917), and Disertori (1961), though some skepticism about his 'philosophy' was still present in Garin (1947). For a critical overview of the Italian literature on Mazzini's political philosophy, see Galasso (2011: 131-146).

to modern debates on nation-building, democracy, and international relations (Haddock, 1999; Mastellone, 2003, 2008; Bayly-Biagini, 2008), with some of his most important writings on these topics now available for the first time to an English-speaking audience (Recchia-Urbinati, 2009), his work has not always attracted the attention it deserved. Three distinct phases can indeed be distinguished in the way nationalism scholars have examined – or ignored – Mazzini across the decades.

In the first one (from the 1930s up through the 1960s), pre- and post-WWII scholars considered nationalism a prominent chapter in the study of political ideas and thus turned to individual authors in the attempt to single out their contribution to the development of nationalist movements in various countries. However, those who embraced this methodology – nationalism as an ideology – were mainly interested in exploring the connection, if any, between nationalist and illiberal ideas against the background of totalitarian experiences; accordingly, they tended to approach the work of Mazzini from highly ideological perspectives. While Carlton Hayes[10] called him the most «vocal and influential advocate of liberal nationalism in the whole nineteenth century»

10 Hayes (1931) distinguished three distinct phases in the dialectic between nationalism and internationalism. While, from ancient civilizations up through the 16th century, the two marched together, with a «pronounced tendency towards the diffusion of foreign influence ("internationalism") and the weakening of tribalism ("nationalism")"» (2), between the 16th and the 19th century (i.e., from Grotius's *De jure belli ac pacis* in 1625 up to Bentham's *Principles of International Law* in 1843), the rise of independent sovereign states led to the advent of *jus gentium* – a sort of inter-state (rather than inter-national) set of norms pivoting around the relation between each state and their ruling dynasties. Finally, from the late 18th century onward, internationalism developed as the relationship among national and nationalistic states – as «a more or less purposeful effort to revive primitive tribalism on an enlarged and more artificial scale» (12). At this level, revising the typology of various strands of «the sentiment of nationalism» offered in 1921 by political scientist M. S. Handman, Hayes distinguished between "humanitarian" (Bolingbroke, Rousseau, Herder), "jacobin" (Robespierre), "traditional" (Burke, Bonald, Schlegel, Metternich), "liberal" (Bentham and James Mill, Humboldt, Michelet and Guizot, Bluntschli, Mazzini and Cavour), "integral" (Comte, Taine, Mussolini, Treitschke), and "economic" forms of nationalism (the latter unfolding from Fichte – the «protagonist of an economic Jacobin nationalism» with his 1800 *The Closed Commercial State* – to the "Christian socialism" of Kinglesy and List, up to the "historical school" of Roscher and Wagner).

(1931: 151)[11], Hans Kohn wrote that his political project «had a religious and almost totalitarian character» as far as it «harbored the danger involved in the romantic longing for the ideal state based upon community, *Gemeinschaft*, with its possible disregard for the legal and rational relations of society» (1946: 98)[12]. Jacob Talmon reached similar conclusions when he described Mazzini as an example of «political messianism», offering a misleading interpretation of his thought as a strand of «messianic nationalism» for which «[u]ltimately sovereignty is not the possession of men at all» (1960: 256-265)[13].

In a second phase (from the early 1970s up through the mid-1990s), scholars substantially revised their understanding of nationalism, no longer interpreted as an ideology but now conceptualized as a social, political, or cultural phenomenon that was the outcome of either the rise of nation-states or the advent of industrial capitalism. The monographs by Charles Tilly (1975), Hugh Seton-Watson (1977) and, most famously, Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (1990) paradigmatically exemplified this approach. On the contrary, authors such as Anthony Smith (1986), Walker Connor (1994), and Adrian Hastings (1997) emphasized the role of ethnicity, symbols, myths, Biblical religion, and vernacular literatures in the forging of (ethno)nationalism as a pre-modern phenomenon. In both cases, the contribution of single figures (including Mazzini) became much less relevant. Gellner, whose classic *Nations and Nationalism* mentioned the Genovese patriot only in one footnote, explained his «lack of interest in the history of nationalist ideas and the contribution and nuances of individual nationalist thinkers» with the argument that nationalism «springs directly and inevitably from […] changes in the overall relation between society,

11 He also added that what he called «Mazzini's liberal nationalism» was never «expressed systematically or with cool logic. It gloomed with emotion and glistened with rhetoric. It was none the less real because it was sometimes mystical» (154).

12 However, Kohn's seminal volume from 1944 made no reference to Mazzini.

13 For a recent (and controversial) attempt to read Mazzini's nationalism as a "political religion" and an open door to what would later be the ideology of Fascism, see Levis Sullam (2008; 2015).

culture and polity» (123-124)[14]. Hobsbawm, whose few erratic mentions of Mazzini concerned his political action more than political thought, explicitly echoed Gellner when writing that the concept of 'nation' is «not part of free-floating philosophical discourse, but socially, historically and locally rooted, and must be explained in terms of these realities» (9)[15]. Connor referenced Mazzini only once (1994: 83) for his ideas on insurrections. In re-conceptualizing nationalism as a political behavior rather than an epiphenomenon of social, cultural, or economic conditions, John Breuilly (1993) contended that Mazzini's «direct influence upon Italian politics should not be exaggerated» since «his pure nationalism had no diplomatic, dynastic, liberal, or popular appeal» (102).

Finally, a third phase began in the late 1990s/early 2000s. After the collapse of multinational states (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) and in the wake of nationalist revivals in East and Central Europe, scholars questioned the hegemony of previous Marxist and Gramscian paradigms and retrieved the distinctively political meaning of national-

14 In chapter IX ("Nationalism and Ideology"), he further added: «This attitude does not spring from any generalized contempt for the role of ideas in history. Some ideas and belief systems do make a very great difference. […] But this does not seem to me to be the case with nationalism. (This incidentally may help to explain why nationalism, notwithstanding its indisputable importance, has received relatively little attention from academic political philosophers: there was not enough in the way of good doctrines and texts, which is the kind of material they used to like, for them to get their teeth into). […] these thinkers did not really make much difference. If one of them had fallen, others would have stepped into his place. No-one was indispensable. The quality of nationalist thought would hardly have been affected much by such substitutions. Their precise doctrines are hardly worth analyzing» (1983: *ibid.*). His only reference to Mazzini is in a footnote (124, n. 1), where he mocks «some truly bizarre views of Mazzini on the proper nationalist organization of Europe» and concludes that «[a]ll in all Mazzini, outside Italy, seemed to have more sense of the political economies of scale and of territorial compactness than of cultural sensibilities». For a critical engagement with Gellner's work on nationalism, see Hall (1988).

15 Hobsbawm recalled Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* to claim that «[…] with Gellner I would stress the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations»; that the national question «is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation«; and that «nations exist […] also in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development» (1990: 10).

ism beyond its socio-economic factors. More importantly, they started considering the theoretical implications of the ideas of major nationalist thinkers and leaders for contemporary debates. This shift in perspective was vigorously encouraged by Bruce Haddock, whose essay on *State and Nation in Mazzini's political thought* began with the following claim:

> One of the paradoxes of the recent resurgence of interest in nationalism is that *little attention has been devoted to what nationalists actually thought*. Where political theorists describing or defending liberalism, socialism, feminism or whatever would expect to engage critically with original advocates of these various positions, the tendency with nationalism has been to treat the ideology as a phenomenon or symptom to be explained or (more often) explained away. In part this simply reflects the profound distaste with which modern liberals, socialists or 'civic republicans' have tended to regard nationalism. […] The void has generally been filled, however, not by an alternatively argued normative theory but by a residual communitarianism which has tended to endorse established traditions of conduct. […] My concern […] is not to defend either nationalism in general or Mazzini in particular. My aim, rather, is to show that *nationalism as a phenomenon cannot be properly addressed without attention being given to specific nationalist theorists*. (Haddock, 1999: 313-314, my emphasis)

While Haddock's account was not entirely accurate – he failed to mention, for instance, the book by Maurizio Viroli on the difference between nationalism (loyalty to the nation) and patriotism (love of country), which had important pages on Mazzini as a prominent example of the nationalization and democratization of patriotism (cfr. Viroli, 1995: 144-155) –, it certainly had its merits. In particular, he urged theorists and historians alike to confront Mazzini's work more directly, beyond any tendency to dissociate history and theory in the study of nationalism – a new direction already visible, to different extents, in the monographs by Yael Tamir (1993), David Miller (1995), Erica Ben-

ner (1995), and Margaret Canovan (1996)[16]. It was in this broader methodological horizon, championed in Italy by Alberto Banti (2000; 2002; 2008), that the ideas of Mazzini gained new prominence. While, at the turn of the century, Denis Mack Smith (1994) and Roland Sarti (1997) had published two important intellectual biographies on the Italian patriot, new efforts were made in the following years, through and beyond Haddock, to explore Mazzini's political theory and dissect his idea of nation[17] – from Lucy Riall (2008; 2009) to Nadia Urbinati (1996; 2008; 2012), who has also meritoriously provided, together with Stefano Recchia, the first English edition of some of his writings on democracy and international politics, spanning across four decades (from the *Manifesto of Young Italy*, 1831, to his *Considerations on the Paris Commune*, 1871). Largely through this important, and much-needed, translation, Mazzini's ideas on nationality and popular sovereignty have overcome linguistic barriers and started attracting the attention of scholars in the history of political thought who are not primarily interested in the Italian case.

A very recent example is the chapter by Duncan Kelly in the volume *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* coedited by Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, which credits Mazzini for offering an emblematically «straightforward nineteenth-century theory of popular sovereignty» that developed «a defensible theory of nationalism in the attempt to produce a coherent theory of representative democracy» (Kelly, 2016: 294)[18]. At this level – Kelly notices – Mazzini's emphasis on the interconnection between the nation and the indirect dimension of sovereignty made his political thought, together with that

16 Among these four authors, it was Canovan who most extensively engaged the thought of Mazzini, which she presented as a prominent example of a «Romantic-collectivist nationalism» conceptualizing nations «as wholes of which individuals are but parts», vis-à-vis a «liberal-individualist nationalism» emphasizing individual consent to government as a key premise for national self-determination (5-15).

17 He would later write again on Mazzini's nationalism in Haddock (2000: 33-41) and Haddock (2008: 204-210).

18 However, in carving out the physiognomy of a 19th-century theory of national popular sovereignty, Kelly prioritizes the contribution of German, French, and Swiss authors over that of Mazzini.

of Bluntschli, Guizot, Tocqueville, and – most prominently – Sièyes, a significant example of the attempt to overcome the dilemmas posed by Bodin, Hobbes, and Rousseau's visions of sovereignty. He extensively discussed the principle of nationality (more than a foundational theorist of modern representative government such as J. S. Mill did) and envisioned a democratic form of nationalism that would later directly inspire the political project of Woodrow Wilson[19].

In the Anglo-American literature, it has been the merit of Nadia Urbinati (2008) to bring into focus the distinctiveness of Mazzini's political theory, unveiling his role in the transformation of republicanism into a «party ideology» meant to mobilize citizens beyond the traditional emphasis on civic virtue, good government, and non-interference. She has also retrieved the multi-layered dimension of his thought, which developed at a time in which rival political languages and projects – liberalism, socialism, and democratic movements – had to compete for electoral consent. His concern with duties more than rights, principles more than interests, revolution more than insurrection, nations more than individuals, nationality more than nationalism, was precisely the outcome of his confrontation with such ideologies – from his polemic against liberalism (and the priority it gave to individual rights) to his critical reading of socialism (for its class-based logic), up through his dissatisfaction with a purely procedural vision of democracy. The same eclectic and yet pioneering logic also applies to his idea of nation, which he theorized as a cultural (and not just juridical) entity, encompassing all the individuals, both men and women (and not just electors), and entailing both pre-political factors (*à la* Herder) and a principled political project in which national self-determination was bound by, and marched together with, democratic institutions. His equation between the Nation and the People corresponded to the one he established between Republic and Democracy, and

19 As Recchia and Urbinati recall in their *Introduction* (2008: 3), in 1919, right before the peace conference in Paris, the American President visited Genoa to honor Mazzini's memory and acknowledged that he had closely studied his writings and, in his own words, «derived guidance from the principles which Mazzini so eloquently expressed». For an extensive analysis, see Recchia (2013).

constituted the core of his political action and thought, as the next section will explain[20].

3. *Democracy at home, democracy abroad: Mazzini's political theory of nations*

Mazzini's significant contribution to the political and intellectual history of the 19th century was multi-dimensional. He was not just a leading figure of the Italian Risorgimento. The moral integrity of his action gained him unconditional praise across Europe and beyond[21], with Margaret Fuller portraying him as a «poetic statesman» in a letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson and Alexander Herzen calling him «the shining star» of the 1848 democratic revolutions and an example of «tragic poetry» for the «grandeur» and «madness» of his project (cfr. Urbinati, 1996: 198-199). His leadership during the short-lived experience of the Roman Republic (February-July 1849) was applauded by Lord Palmerston; George Sorel considered his role in the history of modern Italy more important than Cavour's; and his ideas resonated widely in the development of anticolonial and national movements up through the 20th century (cfr. Mack Smith, 1994: 2; Urbinati, 1996: 199; Recchia-Urbinati, 2009: 1-2). In the mid-1840s, during

20 For space reason, I will not examine the trajectory of Mazzini's nationalism from his early literary writings (e.g., *D'una letteratura europea*, 1829), offering a general defense of Italian culture through the lens of the *querelle* between Classicists and Romantics, to his later political writings. For an insightful overview, see Haddock (1999).

21 While early Mazzini scholars, including Salvemini, equated Mazzini's cosmopolitan project with a Eurocentric global vision, later scholars – from Alessandro Luzio (1920) to Joseph Rossi (1954) – shed light on Mazzini's contacts with leading American figures, such as the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Though he admired the success of the American Civil War, he consistently criticized, throughout his letters and writings, American democracy, with its primacy on individual rights, its economy based on low taxation, and, mostly, its federalism. As most recently recalled by Körner (2017: 108-113), in 1838 Mazzini wrote to one of the co-founders of *Giovine Italia*: «Be so good not to talk to me about America: I have a cordial antipathy to the very name of that country». Mazzini extensively detailed the reasons of his criticism in *Thoughts on Democracy in Europe*.

his exile in London, he progressively established himself as one of the most respected public intellectuals, publishing his *Thoughts upon Democracy* in the *People's Journal* (August 1846-June 1847) and authoritatively contributing to the wider European debate on democracy that had been fueled by the publication of the first volume of Tocqueville's masterpiece in 1835. His journalistic pieces for *Le Monde* (as an English correspondent based in London), *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (where already in June 1839 he published his article "On Democracy" – a reply to Guizot), the *Monthly Chronicle*, and *Revue du Progrés* (a magazine founded by Louis Blanc) contributed to the international (and controversial) reputation of «Joseph Mazzini» as much as the pursuit of his political ideals through the *Giovine Italia* and the *Giovine Europa* (respectively founded in Marseille in 1831 and in Bern in 1834). As Mastellone (2003) has shown, chapter II of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* was an implicit but thorough reply to Mazzini's critique of Communism in the sixth of his articles on the *People's Journal*. He initially disliked the term «democracy», as it tacitly alluded to strife and rebellion, and rather preferred the expression «social government» as more «indicative of the concept of *association* that is the hallmark of this new epoch»[22]. And yet his ideas on representative assemblies, universal suffrage, and popular education as basic preconditions for the progress of society as well as for the independence and unity of nations were shaped by, and shaped in turn, the beliefs of some of the most prominent European thinkers of his time, from Carlyle to J. S. Mill (cfr. Mastellone, 2003: 89-95), in favor or against democratic empowerment. While his skepticism about democracy as a form of government was probably due to the very narrow number of republics that could qualify as democracies at the time (i.e., Switzerland and the United States) (cfr. Sarti, 2014: 48), he never questioned the importance of the people («popolo») in the forging of their national destiny. In his 1838 review, for *Tait's Magazine*, of Sismondi's *Études sur les constitutions des peuples libres* (1836), he jux-

22 Quoted from Sarti (2014: 47). The passage is taken and translated from an essay that Mazzini published in 1835 under the title *Fede e avvenire* ("Faith and the Future").

taposed their approaches – «Everything for the People but nothing through the People» (Sismondi's) and «Everything for the People and everything through the People» (his own) (cfr. Mastellone, 2003: 8). He supposedly anticipated Lincoln's almost identical wording when, in 1851, he explained his phrase «God and the People» as «République du Peuple par le Peuple et pour le Peuple» (see Biagini, 2011: 81). And in 1846, voicing on the *People's Journal* his dissatisfaction with the tendency among advocates for democratic government to compartmentalize its political, financial, social, and educational aspects, he described democracy as «the progress of all through all under the leading of the best and wisest» – that is, as representative democracy (cfr. Mastellone, 2003: 92-93).

Mazzini's ideas on democracy, sovereignty, and the people were constitutive of his political vision as much as his theory of nation. At this level, too, his conceptual distinctions were pioneering. As Urbinati has pointed out, his differentiation between nationality and nationalism, which he extensively explained in his 1871 essay *Nazionalismo e nazionalità*, «was quite an achievement in an age in which the political nation was a category of new coinage, while nationalism had not yet shown its dreadful potentials» (2008: 15-16). In the same vein, he distinguished between «nation» (*nazione*) and «crowd» (*gente*) (cfr. Sarti, 2014: 49) – in his 1835 essay *Nationalité. Quelques idées sur une constitution national* (cfr. Mazzini, 1906-1943, vol. VI: 121-158: 125), the former, unlike the latter, was described as a self-ruling collective united by a «common thought» and a «common right». Again, in outlining his understanding of the nation as a democratic «republic», he carefully differentiated a community of members, based on pre-political factors (e.g., ethnicity, territory, language), from an association of equal citizens, in which such factors were framed within a never-ending process of national self-determination and the pursuit of a shared consciousness unfolding in time. In a long piece titled *Dello sviluppo della libertà in Italia* («On the development of freedom in Italy», 1832), he resorted to a vaguely Rousseauian language to explain that, through the name «republic», he meant «*res publica*: government of the nation held together by the nation itself: government ruled by laws which have really to be the ex-

pression of the general will»[23]. And yet, unlike Rousseau, he never embraced the project of a direct democracy suited for the modern world – a project that, for the Genevan philosopher, was possible through the separation of sovereignty and government (cfr. Tuck, 2016). For Mazzini, nations ought to be republics, and modern republics could not but be of a representative kind (see Urbinati, 1996: 218, n. 31), as he detailed in 1832 in an essay titled *I collaboratori della Giovane Italia ai loro concittadini* (translated as *On the Superiority of Representative Government* in Recchia–Urbinati 2009: 39-52). What he wanted to suggest, as he further clarified in *Dell'unità italiana* (an essay that he began writing in 1833 and completed only in 1861) and in *Nationalité – Unitaires et federalistes* (1835), was that any attempt to ground the legitimacy of a nation in the protection of its past (e.g., traditions, history) and the preservation of its present (e.g., ethnicity, territory) from possible contaminations, either domestic or foreign, would inevitably lead to international anarchy and the selfish pursuit of nationalistic interests. Quite the contrary, nations need to rest on consensus, self-determination, and the practice of equal liberty – Mazzini was indeed one of the first advocates of male and female universal suffrage –; they necessarily presuppose that «the uniformity of right» is not «violated by the existence of caste, privilege, and inequality» (Mazzini, 1917: 57)– a key difference, in his view, between ancient and modern republicanism, with the former envisioning politics as the realm of virtue and thus empowering a political aristocracy[24]; and they entail a set of freedoms, individual as well as political, that are almost inalienable[25].

23 Cfr. Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. II: 147-221, 203). Translation quoted from Urbinati (1996: 218-219, n. 33).

24 «In such a state of things there can be no Nation, no People, but only a multitude, a fortuitous agglomeration of men whom circumstances have brought together and different circumstances will separate» (*ibidem*).

25 Cfr. ivi, 72: «You have to have liberty and everything that is indispensable for the moral and material nourishment of life. Personal liberty; liberty of locomotion; liberty of religious belief; liberty of opinion on all subjects; liberty of expressing opinion through the press or by any other peaceful method; liberty of association so as to be able to cultivate your own minds by contact with the minds of others; liberty of trade in all the productions of our brains and hands».

Equally important was to him the unitary configuration of the Italian nation[26] – a point that Haddock (1999: 321-332) and, most recently, Axel Körner (2017: 108-113) have meritoriously emphasized. As Mazzini extensively explained in the ideological manifesto of Young Italy (*Istruzione generale per gli affratellati nella* Giovine Italia, 1831), presenting arguments that he would later resort to in *Dell'unità italiana* and *Nationalité*, his republican project located sovereignty in a unified nation, based on «unity of belief», «social consensus», and, most relevantly, «unity in political, civil and penal legislation» as well as «unity in education and representation»[27]. Partially drawing on the ideas of Filippo Buonarroti, he claimed that «without unity there is not truly a nation» and pointed at the confusion between political and administrative centralization as a major flaw in the arguments of Italian federalists, who feared that a centralized configuration of the State would open the door to despotism[28]. According to Mazzini, who was indeed aware of the shortcomings of the unitary state envisioned by the Jacobins, federalism was a mere façade for safeguarding and strengthening local interests; it represented a step backwards towards the Medieval age, with its system of municipalities and its corporativist organization of society, and thus an obstacle to the pursuit of a truly national consciousness. Thirty years later, in *Dell'Unità italiana*, he once again powerfully defended his vision of a unitary state; in this case, his critique of federalism had one foot in the past and one in the present. Against the federalists, who claimed that the long history of pre-unitary Italy unquestionably proved the polycentric nature of its social life, Mazzini counter-argued that the reality of a dismembered country was just the

26 The absence of any indication of whether the future Italian State should be federalist or unitary (or even a republic or a monarchy) – in other words, the lack of a clear political and institutional vision – was one of the main reasons why Mazzini felt dissatisfied with the Carbonarist movement. Mazzini had joined the *Carboneria* in 1827 but in 1830 carbonarist Raimondo Doria denounced him; after a brief period in jail, Mazzini opted for the exile, first in Switzerland and then in France.

27 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. II: 45-56, 45). Translation quoted from Haddock (1999: 323).

28 Ivi, 49-50. Translation quoted from Haddock (1999: 323).

outcome of centuries of «diplomacy, foreign usurpation, and force of arms»[29] rather than a congenital feature of the Italian mindset. At the same time, he did not share the enthusiasm of those who considered Switzerland and the United States successful stories of federal states and a valid template for the institutional physiognomy of modern Italy. Mazzini drew attention to Switzerland's neutrality to argue that federalism is, *de facto*, a weak bulwark against the foreign policy ambitions of unitary states, and presented its canton-based system as the result of local élites relentlessly pursuing their own interests in a carefully balanced framework that emerged through time. In his own words, «[e]vents created the Swiss federation; among us it would be nothing but an […] act of will»[30]. On the other hand, already in 1833, Mazzini (presciently) rejected the American example on grounds that the secession of one state would lead to civil war and, ultimately, that federalist institutions entail a highly individualistic mindset, antithetical to the creation, and sustainment, of a genuinely national sentiment. As he wrote in 1860 to Jessie White Mario, «America is the embodiment, if compared to our own ideal, of the philosophy of mere rights: collective thought is forgotten: the educational mission of the State overlooked. It is the negative, individualistic, materialistic school»[31]. And seven years before, in a piece titled *Agli Italiani* ("To the Italians", 1853), he had even called «federalism, after foreign dominion, the greatest plague that might befall Italy: foreign dominion grants us a life; federalism would render [the nation] impotent and condemn it to a slow and inglorious death from the moment of its emergence»[32]. In *Doveri dell'uomo* ("Duties of Man"), which he published in 1860, one year before the unification of Italy, and can thus be read as the most systematic expression of his previous work and thought (see Galasso, 2013: 153-157), Mazzini visually

29 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. III: 261-335, 309) Translation quoted from Haddock (1999: 329).

30 Ivi, 285. Translation quoted from Haddock (1999: 331).

31 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. LXVII: 245-250, 250). Translation quoted from Körner (2017: 109).

32 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. LI: 17-84, 39) Translation quoted from Körner (2017: 110).

described his ideal republic as a «Temple: God at the summit, a People of equals at the base. Do not accept any other formula, any other moral law, if you do not want to dishonor your Country and yourselves» (Mazzini, 1917: 57).

Nevertheless, Mazzini's enthusiasm for the building of the Italian nation was far from unconditional. His distinction between an «aggregation» (the people, lower-case) and an «association» (the People, with capital P)[33] was also meant to place important restraints on the idea of nation itself, restraints that were both internal (equality, liberty, and self-determination) and external (pacifism and duties towards Humanity), precisely to avoid that the nation – even in the more sophisticated meaning of nationality rather nationalism – could turn into a self-sufficient goal. For Mazzini always considered nations an important, but intermediary, step in the progression from individuals to Humanity. He made this point particularly clear in 1836, in an essay titled *Umanità e patria*: «We do not believe in the eternity of races. We do not believe in the eternity of languages. We believe in the progressive development, […] in association as the only method»[34]. And in *Duties of Man* he wrote: «Does the babe know the purpose to which it must tend through Family, Country, Humanity? No; but the purpose exists, and we are beginning to know it for him» (Mazzini, 1917: 76). Family, country, and Humanity – a sequence that is reminiscent of the Aristotelian scheme in the first lines of *Politics* (household, village, and the city) – framed, in his vision, the unfolding of communication and connection among human beings in the horizon of an inclusive universalism capable of reconciling love of liberty – a «universal principle, human not nation-

33 Cfr. *Ibidem*. See also Sarti (2014: 49-50).

34 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. VII: 201-233, 208-209). Translation quoted from Urbinati (1996: 217, n. 15). Urbinati (ivi: 217, n. 20) writes that «'association' was properly speaking the moving principle of Humanity» for Mazzini and finds in Condorcet's *Esquisse* and de Lamennais's *Paroles d'un croyant* the main sources of this notion. At the same time, she identifies in Lessing's *Education of the Human Race* – a particularly popular text among the Saint-Simonians – the writing to which Mazzini turned when, in *Duties of Man*, he wrote that «we hail with Lessing that immensity of future which finds its fulcrum in the Fatherland, and its goal in Humanity» (ivi: 217, n. 21).

al» (*Nationalité*)[35] – with solidarity. As he explained both in his letters and in his writings, he believed that «humanity means love of men» and that our «first duties, first not in point of time but of importance, are to Humanity», since we are «men before [we] are citizens or fathers» (Mazzini, 1979: 4; Mazzini, 1917: 41).

In conclusion, it is imperative to keep in mind that the internal and the external dimensions of modern republics were two equally important, and intimately connected, components of Mazzini's idea of nation – in other words, that for him «[d]emocracy at home [was] a premise for democracy abroad» (Urbinati, 1996: 214). Therefore, more than a democratic theory of *the* nation, Mazzini's was a democratic theory of nations. At this level, his writings on international politics and representative democracy, now finally available to Anglo-American scholars with an extensive introduction, have still much to offer, when properly revisited, to historians and theorists alike, both in and beyond Europe and the US.

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35 Mazzini (1906-1943, vol. VI: 121-158, 150-151. Translation quoted from Urbinati (1996: 201).

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